

SOME NOTES ON THE GRASS GENUS  
*AMPHIBROMUS*

(With the description of a species new to science)

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The name *Amphibromus* is derived from the two Greek words, *amphi*, "around" or on both sides, and *bromus*, a "wild oat," in reference to the resemblance of the grass to a bromus. Our common species of *Bromus* is *B. unioloides*, H. B. and K., Prairie Grass, which is an excellent fodder for moist situations. Our common name for *Amphibromus* is Swamp Wallaby.

The species of the genus *Amphibromus* are moisture loving, and they are to be found growing in water, alongside river banks and on dried swamps. Stock of all classes are fond of the nutritious fodder supplied by the plants, and I have noticed that trout are very often caught in water shaded by a clump of Swamp Wallaby. Perhaps these fish are as fond of the ripened grain as they are of the seed of *Glyceria fluitans*, Manna Grass, another swamp species.

The classification of the species of these useful plants has been in a very bad state, and great difference of opinion has existed regarding their names. Mr. Jason R. Swallen, whilst identifying a collection of Australian grasses, found a new species, which he has described as *Amphibromus recurvatus* in the *American Journal of Botany*, Vol. 18, 1931. This species was collected in the National Park, Tasmania, by our fellow member, Mr. Raleigh A. Black, who had forwarded a collection to the United States National Herbarium. I have found one specimen of the plant from New South Wales, so it is quite likely a native to Victoria.

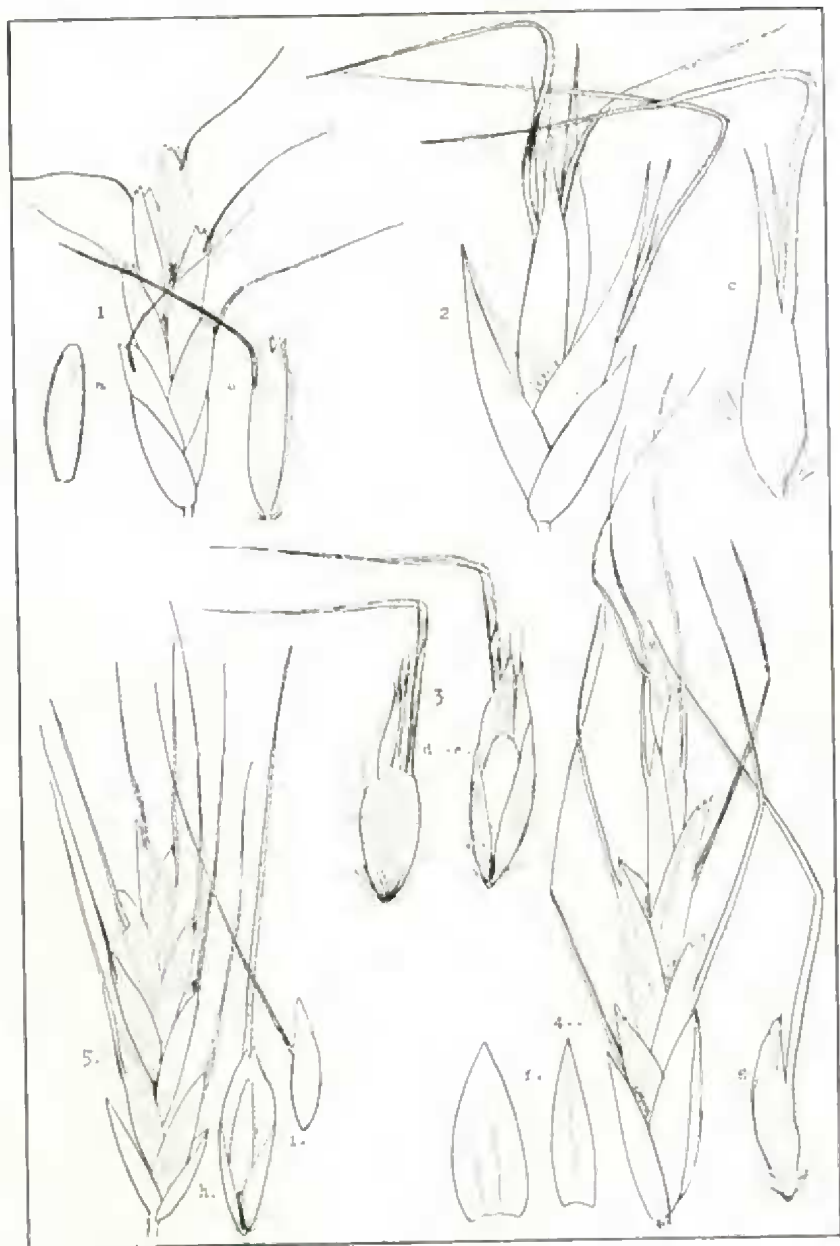
Sir Joseph Hooker, in his monumental work the *Flora Tasmaniaica*, deals with two species under the genus *Danthonia*, namely *D. nervosa* and *D. Archeri*. Other writers have proved that these species rightly belong to *Amphibromus*, but do not separate the species. An examination of the Australian material, clearly shows, in my opinion, that Hooker was correct in separating them. His figures agree exactly with specimens represented in the National Herbarium collections.

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE GENUS

The genus from the point of distribution is a most interesting one, and there are now seven species known to science. South America has two, New Zealand one, and Australia four species.

There are few examples of such a unique distribution of grass species as that of *Amphibromus*. In fact, there are only three genera with similar distribution. They are *Distichlis*, Salt Grass, which grows around our sea-coasts where it proves a

Plate XXVI



Wallaby Grasses, *Amphibromus* species



useful sand-binder, and it is found in America and Australia. *Triodia* is found in North and South America and Australia, and it is represented in the Mallee and the dry interior by the well-known Porcupine Grass, *T. irritans*. The third genus is *Leptoloma*, which is found in North America and North Australian States.

#### KEY TO SPECIES

Awn attached to the middle of the lemma, nerves not protruding into awns.—

- Flowers 4-7; awn bent 17-18 mm. long . . . . . 1. *A. NEESII*,  
Flowers 7-10; awn 12 mm. long, straight . . . . . 2. *A. GRACILIS*.

Awn above the middle of the lemma, nerves protruding in awns.—

- Flowers 2-3; awn slightly above middle,  
nearly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cm. long, 1 cm. long above the  
bend . . . . . 3. *A. ARCHERT*.

- Flowers 4-6; awn near the summit, awn  
bent 13-14 mm. long, 8-9 mm. above bend;  
dark . . . . . 4. *D. RECURVATUS*.

1. *Amphibromus Neesii*, Steud. Swamp Wallaby.

The synonymy of the specific name is rather lengthy, but a brief outline of troubles which botanists have to contend with may be of interest. In the *Flora Novæ Hollandiæ*, 1810, Robert Brown described the plant as *Avena nervosa* from a specimen collected around Port Jackson. In 1854 Steudel named the plant *A. Neesii*. Sir Joseph Hooker used the species name *nervosa*, but placed it under *Danthonia* in the *Flora Tasmania*, 1858. Druce in Report of the Botanical Exchange Club British Isles records it as *Amphibromus nervosus* (R.Br.), Druce. *Amphibromus nervosus*, Nees, is given as a synonym of *Danthonia* by Hooker, but Nees did not publish a specific name. Lamarck in 1791 had published a previous *Avena nervosa*.

Swamp Wallaby is a perennial plant with erect stems from 40-125 cm. high. Leaf sheaths slightly rough, ligule tapering 8-15 mm. long; leaf-blades flat and firm 15-20 cm. long, 3-5 mm. wide, nerves prominent rough above, nearly smooth beneath. Inflorescence a narrow panicle tapering 20-40 cm. long, the lower part enclosed by a sheath. Spikelets on capillary stalks  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 cm. long, 4-7 flowered; glumes obtuse or acute, the first 4-5 mm. long, the second 5-6 mm. long, 3-5 nerved; lemmas with 5 nerves, obtuse, crose, the lowermost 6 mm. long, awn placed just above the middle; awn brownish geniculate, twisted below the bend 17-18 mm. long (fig. 4).

Found in wet places throughout Australia.

*Amphibromus gracilis*, P. F. Morris, Sp. nov.

Graceful Swamp Wallaby.

culmus repens, natans; ramis erectis simplicibus 50-70 cm. alti; ligula elongata, membranacea, subhyalina 7-10 mm. longa. Folia